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### Converts to Civil Society

**Citation for published version:**

Chow, A 2016, 'Converts to Civil Society: Review of Converts to Civil Society by Lida V. Nedilsky', *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 89, no. 1, pp. 150-152.

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

**Published In:**

Pacific Affairs

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are clearly wrong” (227). This is something of a straw-man argument, as it is not clear who specifically believes that transnational capital can ignore local conditions. And yet, later in the book we see that with increased operating expenses in China, the company begins outsourcing production to Vietnam. While Nawon will inevitably be forced to accommodate local conditions in new sites of production, Kim’s own evidence suggests that capital’s advantage in spatial mobility over and against labour and the state remains huge—even if such a move involves frictions and incurs various costs. Kim does not take a strong position here, implying that the relationship between global capital and local states changes, depending on a variety of conditions. While this is certainly true empirically, one is not entirely sure what the analytical takeaway is.

While *Chinese Labor in a Korean Factory* sticks to relatively safe terrain theoretically and analytically, the empirical work is impressive. With its contributions to our understanding of managerial strategy and ethnicity, the book should be of interest to a variety of China and Korea scholars.

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**CONVERTS TO CIVIL SOCIETY: Christianity and Political Culture in Contemporary Hong Kong. *Studies in World Christianity*. By Lida V. Nedilsky.** Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014. xii, 227 pp. (Tables, B&W photos.) US\$49.95, cloth. ISBN 978-1-4813-0032-2.

In August 2014, the National People’s Congress in Beijing determined that Hong Kong could have universal suffrage in electing its chief executive in 2017, provided that the candidates were first nominated by an election committee and, after popular vote, appointed by the central government. Needless to say, many Hong Kong citizens were outraged by these limitations on universal suffrage. In what would become known as the Umbrella Movement, citizens joined in several months of protests in front of the Hong Kong government headquarters. As time progressed, a number of news media outlets reported that many of the leaders of the protests were Christians, and that the ranks of protesters included a large percentage of Christians, Buddhists, and practitioners of Chinese popular religion.

Hence, the publication of *Converts to Civil Society* in July 2014 that looks at the relationship between the Christian faith and civil engagement in contemporary Hong Kong is very timely. It focuses on the years 1997 to 2008, immediately following Hong Kong’s reintegration into Chinese sovereignty, and provides rich ethnographic research into the lives of several Hong Kong citizens as they express their Christian faith through NGOs.

After some introductory material, two chapters engage a key motif discussed throughout this book: conversion. Chapter 2 looks at how

conversion to Christianity sets the initial groundwork for engagement with civil society. For many Hong Kong Christians, conversion often runs against one's parents' wishes and brings about conflicts in fulfilling one's filial duties. The choice of conversion is a step away from collectivism and towards individualism. Such a decision is a break from one community (the family unit) to join another community (the local church). Moreover, this choice of conversion can occur multiple times, from one Christian community to another. Chapter 3 continues this theme and looks at how the conversion to Christianity facilitates the conversion to civil society. Events like the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy protests and the 1997 return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule challenged Hong Kong Christians to consider how to respond to sociopolitical uncertainty. The perceived political apathy of many Christian churches led interviewees to rethink their personal faiths. Christian NGOs were new institutions which addressed the failings of the old institutions of the churches, and provided the Christian with a new expression of individualism.

After these two key chapters, the book follows with three more general discussions about civil society. Chapter 4 provides a survey of the variety of concerns addressed by Christian and non-Christian NGOs in Hong Kong, from economic development and environmental issues, to working with migrant workers and youth. Despite this breadth, the present study focuses on four Christian NGOs that have a primary concern in human rights. Chapter 5 moves on to discuss the longevity of these NGOs and how to pass the fervour of Christian civil engagement to younger generations. The final major chapter, chapter 6, takes the stories and lessons from this single city of Hong Kong and casts an eye upon the much bigger nation of the People's Republic of China. While post-Mao China's pursuit of a socialist market economy has resulted in a rising civil society, this is constantly tempered by the heavy hand of the state. Though the chapter speaks of the significant growth of Christianity in mainland China, the author concludes that the potential for Christians on the mainland to engage in civil society is still quite preliminary and not yet realized.

Two criticisms can be raised against this volume due to its scope. Firstly, while the book focuses on the significance of NGOs in contrast with socially "complacent" institutional churches (76–84, 91), it has a tendency to downplay the important public role that religion has historically played in Hong Kong society. While the Umbrella Movement has brought this point to mind for the broader public, it is worth noting that, in contrast with fledgling NGOs, the long legacy of many Christian denominations has resulted in theological understandings of social engagement (e.g., Catholic social teaching, Anglican social theology, etc.). How has the theological legacy of particular denominations helped to bring shape to Christian NGOs? What about the stories of converts to civil society who engage from within the structures of institutional churches? Recognizing the narrow focus of the book on Hong Kong NGOs, a second criticism can be raised with regards

to the widening of focus to include mainland China in chapter 6. Since the 1990s, there has been a vast amount of scholarly literature that has come out debating the notion of a civil society in mainland China. Moreover, there are a large number of faith-based NGOs that exist in China, such as the Protestant Amity Foundation and the Catholic Jinde Charities, as well as the growing number of urban intellectual churches which act like NGOs in their involvement in human rights activism and social concern. This chapter could have been enriched by engaging these topics.

With these quibbles in mind, one must remember that any monograph should be necessarily narrow in its concern in order to be a manageable research project. Lida Nedilsky's timely and well-written book provides a rich view into the journeys of select individuals as they convert to civil society, expressing their Christian faiths through Hong Kong NGOs. *Converts to Civil Society* is a focused treatment on an important segment of Hong Kong that cannot be ignored by researchers interested in the public role of religion.

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**ON THE FRINGES OF THE HARMONIOUS SOCIETY: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China.** *NIAS Studies in Asian Topics, 53. Edited by Trine Brox, Ildikó Bellér-Hann. Copenhagen: NIAS Press; Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press [distributor], 2014. xvi, 320 pp. (Figures, tables.) US\$32.00, paper. ISBN 978-87-7694-142-0.*

*On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society* is a collection of papers from a workshop held at the University of Copenhagen. The editors have drawn together academics working on Tibet and Xinjiang, situating their works in the context of China's development strategy. The term "harmonious society" is drawn from Hu Jintao's motto during his presidency. Hu was intimately connected to Tibet as the CCP's first secretary. During his presidency of China, he launched the "Western Development Program," which sought to promote an aggressive development strategy for the poor regions on the periphery within the mainstream of China's economy. In the introduction, the editors hope to "make better sense, of the complex interconnectedness between culture, ethnic, and development policies in China" (1). The introduction also quotes Steven Harrell's description of the regions as the "most resistant to the Centre's civilizing efforts" (3). Despite similarities, the two regions are treated as distinct with differing milieus, Buddhist Tibet and Islamic Xinjiang.

The collection consists of twelve contributions, with six papers dealing with Tibet and five papers devoted to Uyghurs. Only the paper by Andrew Fischer (29–68) provides systemic comparative studies of the two regions. Fischer's chapter looks at the "structural foundations" of governance and economic strategies. He places the two regions within the context of state-led